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ABSTRACT

This document comprises a review of the factors which may account for the seeming general low interest among African Americans in migration and for the lack of interest among rural Southern blacks in study abroad. A review of the literature on migration indicates that the following factors directly influence the decision to migrate: (1) costs; (2) distance; (3) employment opportunities; (4) educational status; (5) availability of information; and (6) similarity of social organization. The following factors may specifically mitigate against study abroad by rural Southern blacks: (1) the low average income of black families and the high cost of study abroad; (2) the relatively low educational attainment and the degree of passivity of rural southern blacks with regard to mobility; (3) the insecurity and marginality caused by minority group membership; and (4) the lack of communication networks abroad. Increased participation in educational exchange programs might encourage more blacks to pursue foreign study. Statistical data are included on three tables. A 30-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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SOME MITIGATING FACTORS AGAINST AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE RURAL AMERICAN SOUTH OPTING TO STUDY ABROAD

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The intensity of the push-pull factors which largely determined extensive internal migration among African-Americans in the early decades of the twentieth century have not only faded in intensity but was somehow never extended to include external migration from the United States of America. Interestingly, even the repatriation movements of the nineteenth century aimed primarily to the African continent as a mecca for oppressed African-Americans never seemed to have attracted large numbers of such persons.

There are several contributory factors which seem to deter African-Americans, particularly in the rural American South, from considering living overseas, even for a temporary period, as something desirable. Along with their perceptions of foreign cultures, the very nature of cultural relations in the rural American South acts as a formidable barrier to African-Americans opting to studying abroad.

This paper, which is largely a theoretical piece, examines some factors which may account for the seeming low interest exhibited by African-Americans towards migration, _in toto_, and along with the findings of two research pieces, posit some

mitigating factors against African-Americans opting to study abroad.

For the purposes of this paper, we have operationalized the concept 'international migration' to mean the movement of individuals across their native country's borders or boundaries with the intention of living and working and/or pursuing an educational objective in another country. While international migration implies movement over longer distances than in-migration, it does not have to be limited to this. If international migration means crossing oceans, continents, or multiple national boundaries, the physical distance concerned will usually be greater than moving from the rural areas to the urban centers and from one urban center to another in the same country.

Literature Review

Ever since Ravenstein's attempt to formulate "laws" on migration (1885, 1889), there have been several models aimed at providing explanations for migration. There are two main strands in migration theory. One is primarily concerned with the transfer of labor (Hicks, 1932; Sjaastad, 1962; Lee, 1966; et al.) and, more particularly, from the rural to the urban areas. The other is concerned with the effects of distance, inter alia, and the choice of destination on the pattern of migration (Zipt, 1946; Greenwood, 1975; Schwartz, 1973; McInnis, 1971; Courchene, 1970, Levy and Wadycki, 1974, et al.). According to these theoretical strands, a certain minimum level of income is necessary before migration can take place while distance reflects

the cost of the migration process. Certainly, the financial costs involved in migration are significant enough to inhibit certain kinds of migration (Connell, et al., 1976).

Connel contends that there is a direct correlation between people's economic circumstances and their ability to engage in migration and, more particularly, international migration. Further, they posit that this relationship between economic circumstances and the ability to move is typical of how people with higher income acquire the opportunity to distance themselves further from the poor. In addition, international migration offers the most substantial opportunity for economic advancement. Of greater interest to this study, is the point raised by Connel with respect to the choice of destination in migration. According to Connell, persons considering migration are more likely to exhibit greater preference in considering a place where the social organization is as similar as possible to that from which they are considering moving. This choice for a place with similar social organization may be explained in terms of the would-be migrants' attempt to counter the fear of increasing cultural gaps that are possible at the anticapted destination point.

Undoubtedly, cost is a vital component of migration (Hicks, 1932; Sjaastad, 1962; Lee, 1966; Connell, et al., 1976, et al.). However, the consideration of cost is more likely to affect the decision to migrate rather than the locus of migration. Simultaneously, other factors which serve as impediments to migration also come into play, viz. physical, psychic,

immigration controls by the host country, amount of information on the point of destination, etc. (Rossi, 1955; Leslie and Richardson, 1961; Sabagh, Van Arsdol, and Butler, 1969; Butler and Munroe, 1970; Golant, 1971; Speare, 1974; Swanson, Luloff, and Warlands, 1979; et al.). In addition, the number of persons migrating to a certain place is directly proportional to the number of opportunities available at that place.

It must be emphasized that distance ought not to be perceived as an absolute concept in its own right, rather, effective distance, i.e. - the geographical space which can determine how far a migrant may travel, is a product of the adequacy and price of the communication network across that space. A great emphasis on the improvement in information and communication acts as a pronounced demonstration effect, e.g., presenting aspirants with enticing pictures of the intended points of location. In the case of international migration, this becomes even more important primarily because there are even greater unknowns that the prospective migrant must confront.

Ritchey (1976) addresses the question of distance more pointedly and suggests that distance is thought to capture variations in pecuniary and psychic costs of mobility and information availability. Ritchey indicates that income is regulated as an incentive for additional miles of migration. Similarly, he contends that education serves the useful function of increasing an individual's capacity to obtain and analyze information as well as increasing one's ability to utilize sophisticated information sources. A further argument by Ritchey

is that the deterrent effect of distance is strongest among the young and this inverse relationship tends to decline with age. Furthermore, there is a noticeable increase in the strength of the relationship between migration and distance is increased as education increases with age and occupational status increases.

A pertinent point to consider in this paper is the body of findings from labor mobility studies which include factors that characterize nonmarket conditions of the areas which constitute destination points. Chief among such factors which are related to migration within a push-pull framework are: (a) the presence of relatives and friends or surrogate in the absence of such, (b) amenities and services, (c) public assistance, and (d) racial inequity.

The presence of relatives and friends (or their surrogates) is directly related to choice of the destination area. In general, this factor is thought to operate through increasing the psychic benefits of an area, reducing costs of job relocation, and increasing information availability. The presence of relatives and friends (or their surrogate) is traditionally introduced as an influence on African-American migration. In this context, the presence of relatives and friends is thought to play a supportive role in the face of racial discrimination. Consequently, in the absence of relatives and friends, the percentage of the population that is African-American is used as a surrogate (Cebulah, Kohn, and Vedder, 1983; Pack, 1973; Tarver and Gurley, 1965) and, hence, seen as a measure that will significantly improve the association between African-American

migration and choice of destination. Additionally, migrant stock, or the proportion of the population from the sender areas residing in the receiver areas, is also used to capture the effect of relatives and friends (and surrogate) on migration.

The idea that the attraction of amenities and services of quality of life influences migration enters migration studies through a variety of measures. Climatic conditions are the most common factors; more temperate weather is throught to attract migrants. However, Cebulah (1973) indicates that while whites are often attracted to temperate climates, African-Americans are repelled by such climates. A further investigation of the above condition shows that discrimination in the South (and more so in the rural South), where the climate is temperate, is responsible for the 'wrong' association between African-American migration and climate.

The rate of migration is, in general, directly related to socio-economic status (SES). However, the association between migration and individual SES factors -- occupation, education, and income, is deserving of special consideration. By far, the highest rates of migration occur among professional workers, followed by managerial propriety occupation. Laborers tend to be the least migratory groups. The association between migration and education is stronger than the association between migration and occupation. The college educated have extremely high rates of migration and the rate of migration tends to decrease as the levels of educational attainment decreases (Sahota, 1968; Greenwood, 1969; Miller, 1973; and Ritchey, 1976).

Among the three socio-economic factors, the income differential in migration is least consistent. There is a tendency for the highest migration rates to occur among intermediate income categories, followed by high and then low-income categories. High income male heads of families are less migratory than their counterparts at low and middle-income rankings. Interestingly, on observing the relationship between education and migration within occupational status group, the relative lack of skill can act as a deterrent to migration. Within occupations, those with low educational levels are less employable than those with high educational levels. Therefore, since the potential migrant requires a job upon relocation, he/she may forego migration regardless of his dissatisfaction in his present situation because job requirements at the receiver area exceed the skill he has to offer.

For the purpose of this paper, four factors originating from the literature on migration are selected for special consideration, viz. financial costs and economic levels of prospective migrants; educational levels and propensity to migrate; information networks; and likelihood of similar social organization at the perceived destination point.

Discussion

As has been discussed in the review of the literature, there is a direct relationship between people's economic circumstances and their ability to engage in migration and, more particularly, international migration. If we assume that this is correct, then a consideration of the economic circumstances of

African-Americans may help to explain the low level of participation of African-Americans in study abroad programs. In Table I, "Family Income (African-Americans)," the highest family income distribution for the African-American is between $15,000 and $24,000 while the second highest family income distribution is between $5,000 and $10,000. However, when the African-American family income is compared with the national family income (see Table II: Family Income -- African-American/National), while the concentration for the former is between $15,000 and $24,000, the concenration for the latter tends to be between $50,000 and over. Primarily because international study inevitably involves great financial expenditures, it seems reasonable to conclude that the probability of African-American families expending money on study abroad is far less than other families may.

While the association between education and migration does not yield consistent findings in empirical studies so much so that Bouvier (1976) contends that the relationship between education and migration can have different meanings in different places, there are several studies which indicate a positive relationship between the two variables. We contend, in this study, that there is a higher rate of migration among the college-educated than those who are not. In looking at Table III: Years of School Completed, there is no significant discrepancy between African-Americans and the total population or the white population who are 25 years and older. For all three categories, the concenration is in four completed years of high

school. However, in looking at the category of Americans with four completed years of college, the percentage of whites and the total population who have done so is higher than those who have completed one to three years of college. However, for African-Americans, the converse is true; those who have completed one to three years of college far outnumber those who have completed four years of college. Since this is the case for African-Americans, and since the decision to study abroad normally required either at least four years of college or the intention to complete the undergraduate degree, it is reasonable to suggest that the years educational attainment of African-Americans would have a negative impact on their opting to study abroad. This situation, coupled with the findings of a recent research ("Geographical Immobility Among African-Americans in the Rural South," Mattai, 1988a), which concludes that there is a certain degree of passivity among African-Americans in the rural South with respect to mobility even for economic and social gains, reinforce the contention of Cheong, et al (1986) that African-Americans are less likely to migrate and less likely to migrate long distances (study abroad?).

The question of information networks and the likelihood of similar organizational settings at the anticipated destination point may be seen as interrelated phenomena. Insecurity and marginality of minority group membership play a basic role in the racial differential in migration. When such insecurity and marginality are an integral part of the social fabric of the society in which minority groups live, then the option to move on

a long-term basis outside of their present environment is viewed with much more concern. There is a certain amount of 'distinctiveness' in the South and, more particularly, the rural South. That 'distinctiveness' is evident primarily in terms of religion, race-relations, and nativistic sentiments (Mattai, 1988b). In terms of race-relations, there is a rigid dual stratification of the society in terms of 'black' and 'white'; a stratification which seems endemic to the rural South and finds complementarity with the way in which religion is practiced. According to Samuel Hill (1972), religion functions in the rural South not only to "Transform a heterogeneous aggregate into a homogeneous society" (Hill, 1972:80), but more importantly, ". . . it has helped the system take over the children of all classes, keep them in their proper stations, enforce conformity to old customs, and preserve the order of power relations" (Hill, 1972:80). Additionally, religion and race-relations buttress nativistic responses in the South and not only is anything regarded as 'foreign' seen as inferior, but immigrants themselves are placed in either a black/white category with those placed in the "Black group . . . relegated to a position of inferiority" (Quan and Roebuck, 1982:42-51). This distinctiveness finds itself expressed in the curricula of educational institutions and allows for the imposition (both overtly and covertly) of an ideological hegemony supportive of the status quo so much so that ". . . . these institutional resemblances are no mere accident . . . . [where] members of racial minorities and low-income groups are less likely to do well in school . . . ." (Carnoy and Levin,

1985:1). This has the net effect of increasing the marginality and insecurity of African-Americans and in addition to their poor academic performance, and for those who excel, they must deal with either the absence of communication networks that cause them to see international studies as viable or with a communication blackout of those societies that display a social organization that will integrate them.

This paper raises several issues, the clariciation and amelioration of which, may be helpful in causing the practitioners in the area of international educational exchange to aggressively seek out African-American students for inclusion in their programs. Such students may, primarily through their exposure overseas, return to instil a sense of pride, determination, and hope among the wider African-American society in the rural South and thereby improve their plight.

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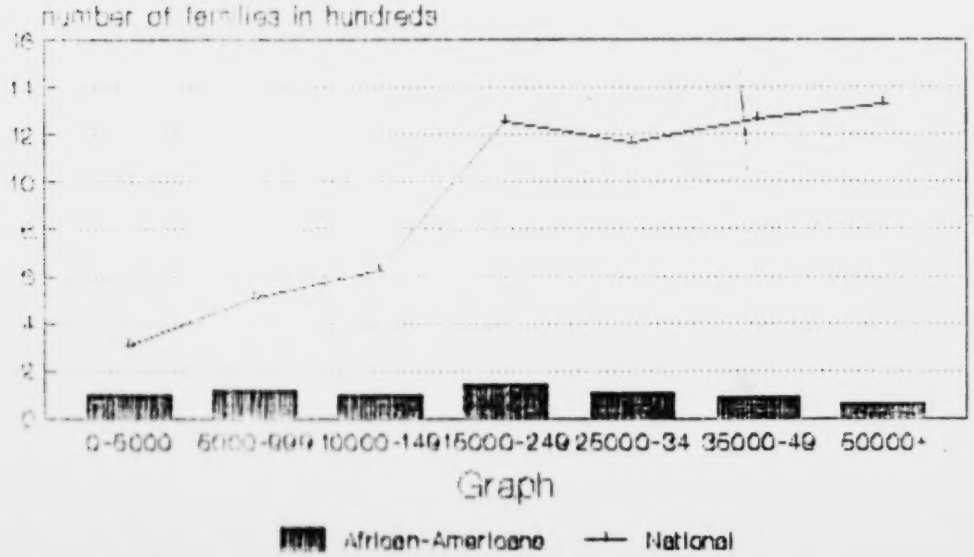
TABLE 1

Family Income
(African-American)

Statistical Abstract Of The U.S.

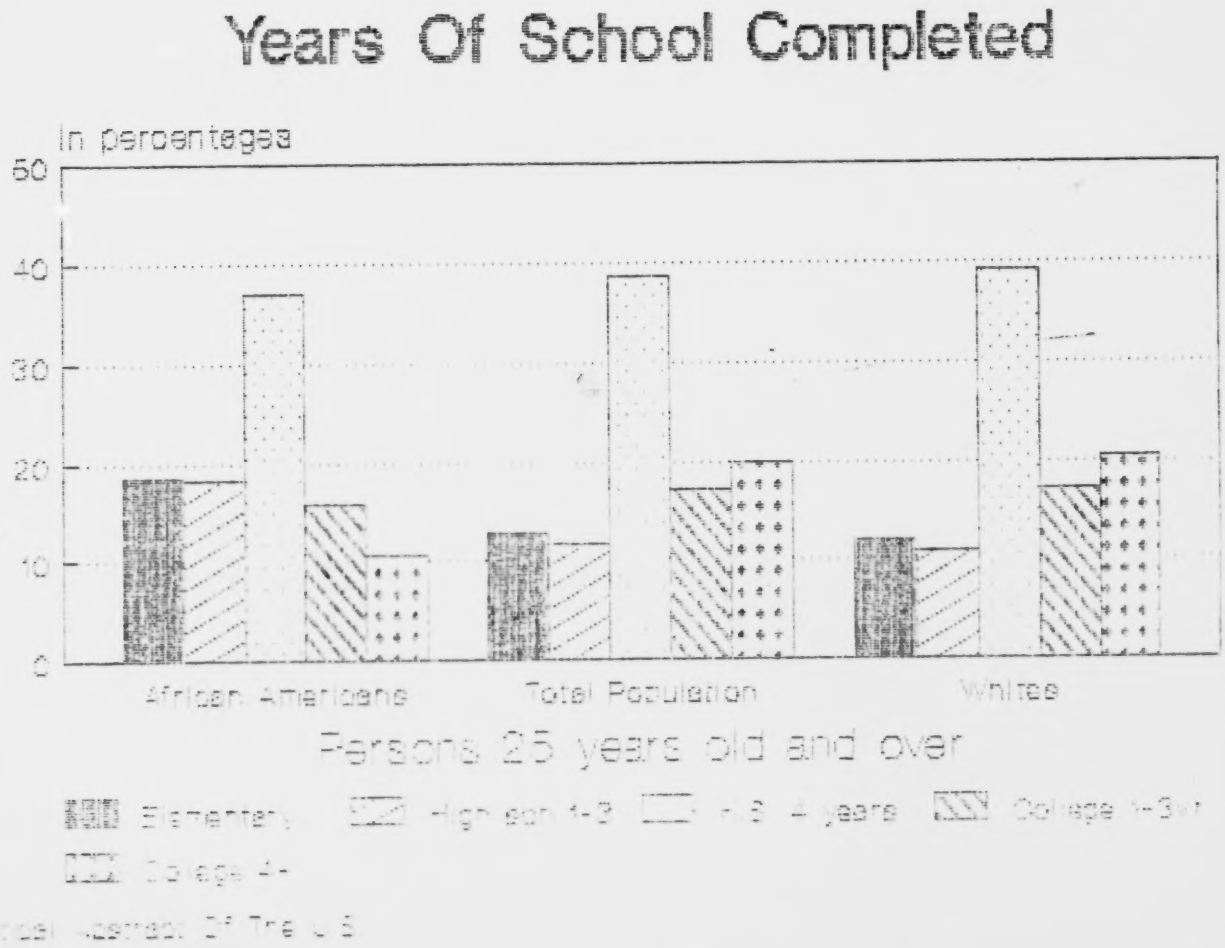
TABLE 2

Family Income
(African-American/National)



Statistical Abstract Of The U.S.

TABLE 3


Years Of School Completed
In percentages
50
40
30
20
10
0
African Americans
Total Population
Whites
Persons 25 years old and over
Elementary
High sch 1-3
1-3 years
College 1-3 yr
College 4+